

Little Hoover Commission March 19, 2002
California Community Colleges Testimony Concerning the Governor's
Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 2002

The California Community Colleges appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the Governor's Reorganization Plan No. 1 of 2002. We welcome in concept the Governor's Proposal and are eager to collaborate in its further development. This testimony will detail our perspective on the community colleges' relationship to the proposed California Labor and Workforce Development Agency, and provide comments.

Central to a system of workforce preparation is the foundation provided by education, including postsecondary education. California's system of postsecondary public education is comprised of the University of California, The California State University and the California Community Colleges. These three segments are similarly situated in the state's workforce development system as providers of the broader educational role. The missions of the California Community Colleges are described as:

Primary missions of the Colleges are to offer academic and vocational education at the lower division level for both younger and older students, including those persons returning to school. Another primary mission is to advance California's economic growth and global competitiveness through education, training, and services that contribute to continuous work force improvement. Essential and important functions of the Colleges include: remedial instruction for those in need of it and in conjunction with the school districts, instruction in English as a second language, adult noncredit instruction, and support services which help students succeed at the postsecondary level. Community Services is designated as an authorized function.

The California Community Colleges, as institutions of postsecondary education, are accredited to the highest standard (Western Association of Schools and Colleges—WASC) in addition to separate specialized accreditation of many of our programs of study. The colleges are full participants in national and state student financial aid and scholarship programs. Although nationally community colleges are recognized as important to States' workforce development systems, certain boundaries also exist. Most notably, we are charged with the responsibility of careful stewardship of our curriculum and delivery systems in terms of integrity, inclusion of all students, and responsiveness to industry and community needs. The California Community Colleges have developed many well-honed systems that ensure the fulfillment of our responsibilities in those areas. To name but a few, examples of our systems of stewardship include:

- Regulation of curriculum development, approval and delivery.
- Regulation of faculty qualifications, with primary responsibility residing with the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges and local districts.
- Industry advisory committees to provide constant update and validation of program offerings.

- Deliberative processes for policy development that include all stakeholders, and a governance system that gives community control a significant voice.
- Student follow up systems to determine the impact of college programs on subsequent earnings.

The result of these stewardship systems is a powerful engine for the economic and social advancement of California.

However, certain boundaries exist for community colleges. What are the boundaries then?

- Clearly, we are limited to activities within our scope. The provision of secondary or upper division postsecondary education is outside of our current scope of mission. However, the colleges are able to provide coordinating linkage support to those areas, such as transfer support to the baccalaureate degree, and the development of educational pathways that assist student movement across educational segments
- Control of our curriculum is a boundary. Because of this mandate, some components of the Governor's Proposal will need further clarification. For example, the development, approval and operation of the educational component (classroom instruction) of apprenticeship programs currently is a community college function. To the extent that the financial support for this activity is moved from the college system, coordinative activity will need to be supported through new, additional funds.

In a similar way, the design and delivery of curriculum that infuses economic development goals with workforce preparation activities is another area that cannot be delegated. The colleges' economic development initiatives work with new and emerging industries in a variety of ways to develop curriculum, ultimately moving newly developed curriculum into the colleges' general offerings.

- A range of student and family privacy and choice issues related to academic pursuits are also a boundary in terms of release of student data, student admissions requirements and students' selection of course of study.

We would welcome the opportunities that will arise to serve Californians even better in partnership with the new proposed California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. The proposed consolidation makes sense and we will work collaboratively with the new agency. Because we anticipate program consolidation will lighten colleges' efforts in maintaining viable partnerships with a variety of workforce preparation entities, we support the concept.